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ABSTRACT

The National Association for Industry-Education Cooperation (NAIEC) creates an approach for school system improvement that combines the necessary standards for achieving mileposts of the Baldrige Quality Criteria and the International Organization of Standardization (ISO) 9000 Standards for Education. Together, the Baldrige Criteria and ISO Standards meet the requirements for developing a high-performance educational system that successfully delivers students who have mastered state-mandated curriculum and student work standards. ISO 9000/Baldrige Criteria provides public education with a quality management system that achieves measurable quality and continuous improvement. A school system that undertakes ISO compliance gains many operational benefits plus improved efficiency and effectiveness through a bottoms-up planning and organizing system. With ISO/Baldrige, schools now have a single, cogent, understandable, and workable methodology to apprise them of their greatest opportunities for systemic reform. A decade-long effort of industry-education collaboration has succeeded in getting states to include two of three elements for school system accountability and a total quality assurance system: standards and assessment. Quality control, the keystone element, is missing. Quality assurance instills an attitude of disciplined caring toward poor results in education. NAIEC is uniquely suited to conduct the ISO 9000/Baldrige initiative as the nation's principal advocate and resource for fostering industry-education collaboration. (YLB)

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PUTTING ISO 9000 STANDARDS AND BALDRIGE QUALITY CRITERIA TO WORK NOW IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Dr. Don Clark, NAIEC President & CEO

Highly regarded Washington Post columnist David Broder's recent editorial **"Using Business Methods to Improve Schools"** casts a national spotlight on what the National Association for Industry-Education Cooperation is already doing. Broder shows how the power of Baldrige quality in a few places are full of promise for school system improvement. He advises that "Baldrige in Education" is almost ready for a national rollout. NAIEC is way ahead. It has a Baldrige approach tailored to the realities of school capability for implementation already on the road.

Broder focuses solely on the Baldrige Criteria. He neglects the fact that these criteria are simply milestones, necessary but not sufficient for education. NAIEC adds the necessary standards for achieving the mileposts, the **ISO 9000 Standards for Education**. Together, Baldrige Criteria and ISO Standards meet the requirements for developing a high performance educational system that can successfully deliver students who have mastered the state-mandated curriculum and student work standards.

NAIEC has plans in place and the know-how and experience to implement an industry-education collaborative initiative on a state-by-state basis. This effort is underway at a time when state education leaders have embarked on a high-stakes decision to raise academic standards in public schools. ISO 9000/Baldrige Criteria provides public education with a quality management system "that works" in **achieving measurable quality and continuous improvement** which are central in helping successfully implement the new mandated academic standards.

The starting point for school improvement is an acceptance of new **standards**, and standards, as every business person understands are the *sine qua non* of an enterprise. ISO 9000 for education is a series of industry management standards developed by the International Organization of Standardization (ISO) that identify the basic elements of a quality system. Many Baldrige recognized businesses become interested in getting registered to ISO 9000 because they are required to do so by the customer. Companies have increasingly found that total quality improvement is absolutely necessary to remain competitive in today's global markets. More than 20,000 U.S. companies are currently ISO certified.

The ISO standards, like all other standards, are simply tools to be used by an organization to help guarantee success in achieving a set of its objectives. In this case, the broad objective is achieving measurable quality and continuous improvement—the key ingredients of quality in education—through a voluntary multi-step strategy. A school system that undertakes ISO compliance gains many operational benefits plus improved efficiency and effectiveness through **a bottoms-up**

*(continued pg. 2, col. 1 see **Putting**)*

CE 079 173

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continued from page 1

planning and organizing system that will require the system, as in business, to document its processes, follow its own procedures, have complete and accurate record keeping, and maintain continuous improvement. These motivate educators to say what they do, do what they say, document, and let an independent review take place.

The Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award Criteria sets forth categories for achieving quality management in any organization. The basic thrust is to align all management and employee activities with strategic plans aimed at improving internal and external results. **Alignment in a school system** refers to consistency of plans, processes and actions, information, and decisions among the units in the system in support of key state and system goals. ISO 9000 gives specific directions for making progress toward the categories.

ISO 9000 and the Baldrige Criteria are best viewed as **two circles that intersect**. ISO adds the documentation, the standardization, and the common language that are set up by the school. They both have a common intersection in customer satisfaction and the quality system that actually manages and governs the system. Baldrige criteria helps to establish a system that focuses on the customer, facilitates a long-term approach to continuous improvement, promotes prevention rather than remediation, and values results.

What makes Baldrige married to ISO 9000 work is that its approach to quality is total; it asks that quality be pursued on all fronts, by everyone associated with the organization. With ISO/Baldrige, **schools now have a single, cogent, understandable, and workable methodology** to apprise them of their greatest opportunities for **systemic reform** and to drive them single-mindedly toward success in meeting what the state requires.

This is good news about school **system improvement**. Here's why. A decade-long effort of industry-education collaboration has succeeded in getting states to include two of three elements for school system accountability: **standards and assessment**. A third is missing yet readily available by NAIEC's ISO/Baldrige initiative. We know what the missing element is and how to put it into place effectively and efficiently in our public schools.

Quality control is the missing element. It can be called the **keystone element** because like the keystone in forming a complete arch, quality control locks the standards and assessments together to form a **quality assurance system**. The keystone element is made up of the marriage of the two recognized vehicles (that embody quality control) for quality assurance: ISO 9000 standards and the Malcolm Baldrige Quality Award Criteria. Quality control is the guarantee that there is a system in place to achieve what is desired. Standards, assessments and quality control are the elements of a **total quality assurance system**.

Quality assurance instills a remarkable change in the conventional attitude toward poor results in education. It is an attitude of **disciplined caring**. If the school system does not achieve the performance standards set for it; in short, if the students are not successfully prepared to the fullest extent feasible, people in charge care enough in a disciplined way to work on the system until it does. Neither the customers (the students and the parents) nor the providers (faculty and stakeholders) are blamed. It is the system's job to teach successfully. If it does not, the reasons for discrepancy are studied until confirmed as true, and then corrective action requirements are put into place or presented to the proper sources for installation.

The NAIEC industry-education collaborative model focuses on achieving K-12 school reform, i.e., fundamental change in a state's education system, by helping schools successfully **implement the states' new mandated academic standards** through an ISO 9000/Baldrige quality management system. The only way schools will successfully meet the mandatory state testing is to ensure that the standards are being met by putting into place the processes known to meet those standards.

NAIEC is uniquely suited to conduct the ISO 9000/Baldrige initiative as the nation's principle advocate and resource for fostering industry-education collaboration in (1) continuous school improvement, (2) workforce preparation, and (3) economic development. The Association not only has the know-how with respect to the content and practices of ISO 9000/Baldrige, it also knows how to bring about successful change. Over the past 35 years, NAIEC has assisted communities establish formal broad-based industry-education councils/alliances in the U.S. and Canada with a mission that focuses on the three previously cited areas.

As we proceed on a state-by-state basis in **developing a reliable high-performance educational system** through our industry-education collaborative ISO 9000/Baldrige model, we consider a state's economic development groups as key stakeholders in this effort. The demand for school reform has come about because we are in a new economy with higher standards and the need for fully prepared students. Business has been the leader in calling for a responsive educational delivery system because of poor employee preparation and shortages of qualified people—high school diplomas that don't even signify attendance let alone achievement. Schools are producing too many students who cannot and will not be able to support themselves adequately and their families. They are and will increasingly become a drag on our economy and the welfare of our country.

NAIEC centers the leadership for the states' initiatives on the economic development groups where business leadership exists. They are exactly the ones that have the motives for helping bring about improvement in education. They also often contain the personnel who have the know-how, or who can release people who have it, to mentor the schools which is central to implementing ISO 9000/Baldrige.

Our experience shows that when industry and education collaborate as informed participants in improving education, great things can happen. The adoption of standards and assessments in the last decade proves that. Now, we are offering practitioners from both sectors an ISO 9000/Baldrige initiative that is powerful and timely, one that represents the keystone arch, **the final piece that locks standards and assessments into a system that gives quality assurance** to both educators and stakeholders who now are capable of achieving measurable quality and continuous improvement necessary in developing a high-performance educational system. □

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